

Ask about energy efficiency

THE Iowa State Fair and the Farm Progress Show are both must-see summer events. There's always good food, good conversation and a good chance your favorite equipment dealers will be looking for an excuse to talk shop. Take a minute to sit back and ask them, "How can I save more energy?"

New equipment purchases should be evaluated with total cost in mind, including the cost of energy. According to the last USDA Census of Agriculture, gasoline and diesel fuel consumption account for more farm energy costs in Iowa than electricity, propane and natural gas combined. Saving gallons isn't the only way to save dollars around the farm, but a new grain dryer isn't nearly as much fun to drive as a new tractor!

Tractors: Climbing up the steps of a shiny, new tractor is a treat for children and grown-ups alike. As you chat with the sales reps while you're waiting to get up close and personal with that new display model, test their knowledge by asking for specs on fuel efficiency.

Over the years, tractor design and performance have steadily improved, and so has fuel economy. Like automobiles, the fuel efficiency of modern tractors is dramatically better than older models, and increasing efficiency results in increased energy savings. Take a moment to compare horsepower hours per gallon alongside torque, drawbar and PTO horsepower. Those energy savings may be enough to justify your next upgrade sooner than expected.

Fans: If you're planning a summer road trip, it's important to be comfortable, and good air conditioning in the car is essential. Likewise, proper air circulation and ventilation reduces animal stress in livestock facilities.

If your barn has a high ceiling, consider the energy efficiency of a high-volume, low-speed fan. These fans require much less electricity than high-speed fans and provide comparable air movement. If you're in the market for traditional circulating fans, don't assume that two fans of the same size are equally efficient. Ask for product specifications that include air movement per watt (cfm/watt) for an apples-to-apples comparison of different manufacturers. You'll need to know the cfm/watt rating to determine which fans may be eligible for rebates from your local utility provider.

Livestock waterers: Some of your livestock may be making an appearance at the fair this summer. Whether you're raising dairy heifers or a grand champion steer, you need a reliable, energy-efficient waterer to keep them in good condition throughout the year.

As you investigate different vendors, pay close attention to insulation. Is it moisture-resistant for increased durability? Additional insulation is the easiest way to improve energy conservation with any waterer, and energy-free waterers use thicker insulation than heated models. If you're considering a heated waterer to see you through the winter, study the design and product specifications of the heating element to ensure it will meet your needs without running up your electricity bill.



Farm Energy

By DANA PETERSEN

Grain dryers: After you've had your fill of corn dogs and combine demonstrations, harvest will be upon us. Crops

in many counties have taken a beating from weather this summer, and after last year, we've learned to hope for the best while preparing for the worst.

If you're considering modifications to your grain drying system, remember energy conservation is impacted by both dryer design and dryer management. Compare and contrast the design features for your top choices and

gather as much information as possible. Discuss your farm's needs with the manufacturer and your local utility provider. Consider implementing a farm energy audit to ensure energy efficiency and rebate eligibility.

Petersen is the program coordinator for the Farm Energy Conservation and Efficiency Initiative, sponsored by the Iowa Energy Center.

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